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SETHONA.

A

TRAGEDY.

AS IT IS PERFORMED AT THE

THEATRE-ROYAL

IN

DRURY-LANE.

LONDON:
Printed for T. BECKET, the Corner of the Adelphi, in the Strand.

MDCCLXXIV.

[Price One Shilling and Six-pence.]

ANTHONY.

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As it is performed at the

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[Price One Shilling, and Six pence.]

PROLOGUE.

Spoken by Mr. REDDISH.

Written by Mr. CUMBERLAND.

IN claſſic times, as learned authors ſay,
When Greek *or* Roman *wits produc'd a play,*
The herald Prologue, *'ere the ſports began,*
Fairly ſtept forward, and announc'd the plan:
In few plain words he ran the fable through,
And, without favour, publiſh'd all he knew.
An honeſt cuſtom: for the plan was clear,
The ſcene was ſimple, and the Muſe ſincere;
No tawdry faſhions warp'd the public taſte,
The times were candid, and the ſtage was chaſte.

Can we expect, in theſe enlighten'd days,
A courtly age ſhould hold ſuch vulgar ways?
Or that a blabbing prologue ſhould diſcloſe
Scenes, which no Muſe of faſhion ever ſhows:
No, Sirs, ——Sethona is the lady's name——
She lives at Memphis—of unſullied fame:
A Tyrant woo'd her—but ſhe lik'd another,
And once 'twas fear'd her lover was her brother.
As for the reſt, a little patience borrow,
The Chronicle *will tell you all to-morrow.*
Authors are now ſo over modeſt grown,
They publiſh all men's writings, but their own.

But let no living bard conceive offence,
Nor take the general in a partial ſenſe.
Peace to all ſuch! the lab'ring bee muſt feed
From flow'r to flow'r; perchance from weed to weed;
And ſhould the comb unwelcome flavour yield,
The fault's not in the fabric, but the field;

The

PROLOGUE.

The critic waſp, mean while upon the wing,
(An inſect fraught with nothing but a ſting)
Diſturbs th' induſtrious hive, for malice ſake,
Marring that honey, which he cannot make.

An abſent bard, engag'd in diſtant war,
This night appears by proxy at your bar:
As o'er Arabia's wilds he took his way,
From ſultry Ormus and the realms of day,
His active mind, ſuperior to its toil,
Struck out theſe ſcenes upon the burning ſoil.
No cooling grottoes, no umbrageous groves,
To win the Graces, and allure the Loves;
No Heliconian fount wherein to dip,
And ſlake the burning fever on his lip;
Before him all is deſart, waſte, and dry,
Above him flames the tyrant of the ſky;
Around his temples gath'ring whirlwinas fight,
And drifts of ſcorching duſt involve the light:
Oh, ſnatch your Poet from impending death,
And on his ſhrine we'll hang his votive wreath.

EPILOGUE.

Spoken by Mrs. BARRY.

Written by Mr. GARRICK.

AS it is prov'd, by ſcholars *of great* fame,
That Gipſies *and* Egyptians *are the ſame*;
I, from my throne of Memphis, *ſhift the ſcene,*
And of the Gipſies, *now ſtep forth the Queen!*
Suppoſe, that with a blanket on my ſhoulder,
An old ſtrip'd jacket, petticoat ſtill older,
With ebon locks, in wild diſorder ſpread,
The diadem, a clout about my head;
My dingy Majeſty here takes her ſtand,
Two children at my back, and one in hand;
With curtſey thus---and arts my mother taught,
I'll tell your fortunes, as a Gipſey ought:
Too far to reach your palms---I'll mark your traces,
Which fate has drawn upon your comely faces;
See what is written on the outward ſkin,
And from the title page, *know all* within:
Firſt, in your *faces* * *I will mark each letter*——
Had they been cleaner I had ſeen 'em better;
Yet through that cloud ſome rays of ſun-ſhine dart,
An unwaſh'd face oft veils the cleaneſt heart.
That honeſt Tar, *with* Nancy *by his ſide,*
So loving, leering, whiſpers thus his bride,
" *I love you Nancy, faith and troth I do,*
" *Sound as a biſcuit is my heart, and true;*
" *Indeed, dear Johnny, ſo do I love you.*"
Love on, fond pair, indulge your inclination,
You ne'er will know, for want of education,
Hate, infidelity, *and* ſeparation——

* To the Upper Gallery.

Some

EPILOGUE.

Some Cits *I see look dull, and some look gay,*
As in Change-Alley they have pass'd the day,
City Barometers!—*for as stocks go,*
What Mercury *they have, is* high *or* low.
What's in the wind which makes that Patriot *veer?*
He smells a contract *or* lott'ry *next year*;
Some Courtiers *too I see, whose features low'r,*
Just turning patriots, *they begin to* sour;
What in your faces can a Gipsey see?
Ye Youths *of fashion, and of family!*
What are we not to hope from taste, and rank?
All prizes in this lottery?---Blank---blank---blank---
Now for the Ladies---*I no lines can spy*
To tell their fortunes---and I'll tell you why;
Those fine-drawn lines, which would their fate display,
Are, by the hand of fashion, *brush'd away*;
Pity it is, on beauty's fairest spot,
Where nature *writes her best, they make a blot!---*
I'd tell our Author's *fortune, but his face,*
As distant far as India from this place,
Requires a keener sight than mine to view;
His FORTUNE *can be only told by* YOU.

ADVERTISEMENT.

COLONEL DOW, when he ſailed for India, left the following Tragedy in the poſſeſſion of Mr. GARRICK. The event has ſhewn, that the reputation of an abſent author could not have been truſted in ſafer hands. He ſpared no expence as a manager, no pains as a man of taſte. The Scenery is ſtrictly characteriſtical, and highly pictureſque. The Dreſſes are magnificent and expenſive, the Parts caſt with great judgement; and the whole conducted with that regularity and eaſe, which can only be attained by a thorough knowledge of the Drama, and the buſineſs of the Stage. Mrs. BARRY, poſſeſſed of every power to touch, to penetrate, to diſſolve the heart, exerted them in a degree that aſtoniſhed while it pleaſed the audience. Mr. BARRY was judicious, chaſte, and pathetic in Seraphis. Mr. REDDISH, ſpirited, and full of fire, in Menes. In their reſpective parts, the two AICKINS deſerved and received great applauſe. Ample juſtice was done by Mr. PACKER, and others, to the reſt of the characters. The public, and the author, are indebted to Mr. CUMBERLAND, for an elegant and claſſical Prologue: And to Mr. GARRICK, for one of the beſt Epilogues that ever was pronounced from the ſtage.

Dramatis Personæ.

SERAPHIS, King of Egypt, Mr. BARRY,

AMASIS, Usurper of the Throne of Egypt, } Mr. AICKIN,

MENES, next Male-Heir to the Crown, } Mr. REDDISH,

ORUS, High Priest of Osiris, Mr. J. AICKIN,

OTANES, Governor of Saïs, Mr. PACKER,

MYRTÆUS, General of the Forces, Mr. DAVIES,

OFFICERS, Mr. WRIGHT, Mr. WHEELER, and Mr. KEEN,

SETHONA, Daughter of Seraphis, Mrs. BARRY,

GUARDS, &c. &c.

SETHONA,

SETHONA.

A TRAGEDY.

ACT I.

SCENE, *the Temple of* OSIRIS, *at* MEMPHIS.

ORUS, *the High Priest, sacrificing at the altar.*
SETHONA *kneeling before the statue of* OSIRIS.

SETHONA.

THOU pow'r divine! whose awful presence shakes
This sacred fane; if e'er thy pitying hand
Was stretch'd to helpless mortals in distress,
O now protect a weak defenceless maid,
From Amasis, whose hands are drench'd in blood,
The blood of Menes, dear-lamented youth!
And Seraphis, my father, Egypt's king.

ORUS. *(advancing from the altar.)*

Lo! the devoted victims are consum'd,
And all due rites of sacrifice perform'd,
Upon the altar of the great Osiris!

SETHONA.

Thou ſacred prophet! whoſe enlighten'd mind
Pierces the ſhades of dark futurity,
What have the gods decreed? Am I condemn'd
To wed my father's murderer? The man
Who tore my deſtin'd huſband from my arms,
Ev'n at the altar e'er the rites began,
And left me thus to ſorrow, to deſpair.

ORUS.

Daughter of grief! Sethona! every hour
Changes the ſtate of things. To day the ſea,
Rous'd by the Northern wind, aſſails the ſky,
And wears the face of ruin. E'er the morn
Unveils her eyes, it ſmooths its ruffl'd brow,
And holds a mirrour to the ſtars of heav'n.

SETHONA.

Orus, I owe this emblem of my fate
To thy humanity. What ray of joy,
Can pierce the deep, dark dwelling of my ſoul,
Where Menes lies entomb'd?

ORUS.

Time will unfold
More than thy hopes could cheriſh. Know, this night,
This preſent hour, is pregnant with events,
To me in part reveal'd.

SETHONA.

Ha! what events?
The dimeſt ſhade of hope, in grief like mine,
Fancy may work to comfort.

ORUS.

As I ſtood
Before the altar of Ammonian Jove,
In fervent meditation, I beheld
The tow'rs of Memphis tottering, and the Nile
Ruſhing thro' all her gates. I heard a ſound,

As

As when the winds, contending in their caves,
Diſturb the mountains; ſaw the ſhadowy lines
Of banner'd armies cloſing in the air.
Streaming with blood, a headleſs trunk appear'd,
Graſping a ſcepter. O'er him ſtrode in ſteel
The warlike form of Menes. Laſt uproſe,
Dim thro' the gleam of arms, a hoary head
Encircled with a gorgeous diadem:
It ſeem'd thy father!

SETHONA.

Seraphis! my father,
And Menes? hapleſs ghoſts!

ORUS.

Peace to their ſhades!
'Twas but a viſion of the mental eye,
Th' unbodied ſemblances of future things,
And not departed ſpirits.

SETHONA.

Hope begins
To dawn upon me. In thy words I feel
The force of inſpiration. Yet my grief
Succeeds, like darkneſs to the tranſient gleam
Of ſome deluding meteor! Can the tomb
Give up its dead? Can Menes hear my voice,
And reſcue me from the deteſted arms
Of Amaſis? Can Seraphis reſtore
The long extinguiſh'd glories of his line?
Can I forget my ſorrow? Idle dreams!

ORUS.

And yet, ſuch dreams may take ſubſtantial forms.
Three days have not elaps'd ſince from this fane
Menes was torn by Amaſis, as yet
No certain tidings of his fate are known:
Tho' fame reports his death. To-day his friend,
Noble Otanes, by the king's command

From Säis came, where he hath govern'd long,
Averſe from courts, with dignity and fame;
Worthy his high deſcent from Egypt's kings.

SETHONA.

Oh, might I ſee him, e'er the Tyrant's rage
Deſtroys his ſacred life.

ORUS.

Fear not his rage.
The fate of Menes has already ra'is'd
A ſtorm in Memphis, that may ſhake his throne.
Otanes, on his entrance, has received
The higheſt honours by a ſubject borne.

Enter MYRTÆUS. *(Orus retires to the altar.)*

MYRTÆUS.

Prepare the nuptial rites. The king approaches.

SETHONA.

Alas, Myrtæus! whither ſhall I fly?
Who can protect me! innocence is weak,
And tears, like the cold chryſtal drops in caves,
Can only ſerve to petrify the heart
Of Amaſis.

MYRTÆUS.

His ſoul is fierce, but love——

SETHONA.

Speak not of love, from Amaſis, nor think
So meanly of my virtue, of my faith,
And firm affection for departed Menes.
Tho' dead, his image dwells within my ſoul,
And leaves no room for others,—all my joys
Were grafted on him. Now the tree is fall'n,
And I am left to wither on the ground.

MYRTÆUS.

Recal not thus the mem'ry of the dead,
Nor rend the veil which nature kindly draws

Between

Between us and the tomb; and yet my ſoul,
When thou complain'ſt, ſeems covetous of grief.
I could ſit down and liſten to thy tale,
Devour each piteous circumſtance of woe,
And mourn with thee for ever.

SETHONA.

Oh! Myrtæus!
He was a friend moſt worthy of thy tears:
Humane, ſuſceptible of the diſtreſs
Of others, but unſhaken by his own.
Gentle in peace, but terrible in war,
As the rude blaſt, that from our deſart pours,
Dark with the fate of armies.

MYRTÆUS.

Ah! forbear;
You pierce my very ſoul.

SETHONA.

O, could I fly
To ſome brown deſart, far remov'd from man,
And in the ſhade of ſome poor lonely tree,
Beſide a ling'ring ſtream, in ſilence ſit,
And muſe from morn to eve, from eve to morn.
Or tell my ſiſter of the ſky, that wanes
With me apace, the ſtory of my woe;
There undiſturb'd, I might devour my grief,
Like ſome ſad ghoſt, that nightly ſits alone,
Pale, bending o'er the ſlowly twinkling flame
Of a decaying meteor. *(flouriſh of trumpets,*

MYRTÆUS.

'Tis the king!

SETHONA.

Whither ſhall I reſort? Amid my foes
I ſtand alone, unpitied and forlorn! [*Exit Sethona.*

Enter

Enter AMASIS *attended.*

AMASIS.

Why flies Sethona? Now the voice of mirth
Reſounds thro' Egypt, and propitious ſtars
Combine to bleſs this hour?

MYRTÆUS.

At thy approach
She ſuddenly withdrew, tears in her eyes
Her looks expreſſing anguiſh and deſpair.

AMASIS.

The mere caprice of women, ſtill afraid,
Or ſeemingly afraid of what they wiſh,
They fly but to delude——

MYRTÆUS.

She ſighs and talks
Of love and Menes, in ſuch mournful ſtrain,
As fills each eye with ſympathetic tears.
She will not hear of comfort. Time, perhaps,
And gentle means, may ſooth her mind to peace,
But force might now be fatal.

AMASIS.

Fear not that.
Inform the princeſs we attend her preſence.

MYRTÆUS.

Too well ſhe knows it.—— [*Exit Myrtæus.*

ORUS. *(deſcending from the altar.)*

Sovereign of the Nile!
Let not my words offend——The gods forbid
The ſolemn rites. Whilſt, in my hand, I held
The victim's heart it burſt, and on the ground
Diſſolv'd away!

AMASIS.

Then let another bleed!

ORUS.

Dare I adviſe, the nuptials were delay'd

'Till

Till ſome propitious idle hour of peace:
For whilſt the Ethiopian in his wrath
Threatens invaſion, fame and glory call
For deeds of arms: and doſt thou yield to love?

AMASIS.

Preſumptious prieſt! thy ſanctity, thy age,
And all thoſe myſtic ſymbols of thy god,
Shall not protect thee:---ſpeak the omens fair!

ORUS.

O King! 'tis not for mortals to belie
The ſacred will of heaven. The earth itſelf
Teems with uncommon births. The tombs appear
Deſerted by their dead. The air is fill'd
With ſounds; the ſtreets with unſubſtantial forms.
Great Ammon's helmet nods upon his brow,
Whilſt he declares ambiguous oracles,
And frowns on Egypt.

AMASIS.

Let him ſhroud the ſun
In tenfold darkneſs, ſhake the ſolid earth,
Subvert the broad-bas'd pyramids; diſcloſe
The oozy bottom of the frighted Nile,
My purpoſe ſtands unmov'd. Then hence, away:
Let my commands be oracles to thee;
And Ammon may be ſilent. [*Exit Orus.*

Enter SETHONA *and* MYRTÆUS.

AMASIS.

How long, Sethona, wilt thou arm thoſe eyes
With cold diſdain againſt me? Thus how long,
At awful diſtance, muſt I breathe my vows
Of love and conſtancy? The hour is come,
The nuptial feaſt prepar'd, and yet thou ſhun'ſt
My longing arms, as if contagion ſprung
From every touch.

SETHONA.

SETHONA.

My looks have not deceiv'd!
My ſoul deteſts thy perſon and thy name.
Haſt thou not been the ſcourge of all my race?
The bane of all my joys? and can'ſt thou hope
Returns of love for unexampl'd wrongs?

AMASIS.

Forgive the paſt. The gods themſelves forgive.
I have been much to blame. But if ſincere
Repentance—If the pangs of keen remorſe
Could e're attone for guilt, I ſtand abſolv'd
And hope for thy forgiveneſs.—Hope for more,
Thy love——For which alone I riſqu'd my life,
And dar'd perdition!

SETHONA.

Ha! it is a crime
To liſten to thy words.—I'll hear no more.—
My love is not for thee. The guilty thought
Wou'd ſhake this ſacred temple, and profane
The preſence of the gods.——The ſhades of night,
The midnight hour of ſilence, the dark tomb
Of Seraphis my father, the long line
Of anceſtry, that darkly reſt in death
Within the ſacred pyramids; on theſe
My melancholly ſoul delights to dwell:
There let me wander and indulge my woes.

AMASIS.

Can unavailing ſorrow ſooth the dead?
Deep are their ſlumbers, deaf their ear to woe!
Or did their ſpirits hover round--can joy
Ariſe from our diſtreſs? Can thoſe they lov'd
Afford them pleaſure by inceſſant tears?
Then weep no more!--Mount thou thy father's throne!
Egypt ſhall yield her ſceptre to thy hand,
And Africk's nations bend beneath thy ſway.

SETHONA.

Could'ſt thou enthrone me, 'midſt the ſtars of heav'n,
And ſay, the world that rolls beneath thy feet,
And all theſe ſplendid orbs around, are thine,
I would reject them, as the price of guilt,
Though preſs'd with all the miſeries of life.

AMASIS.

Enough of argument! Know then this hour
Shall make thee mine; ſhall bend thee to my arms;
Shall change theſe haughty frowns, and vain complaints,
To gentle ſmiles and murmurings of love.

SETHONA.

Then know my ſoul, amidſt my ruin'd ſtate,
Maintains the dignity of Egypt's kings,
Looks down upon thee.—Threats to me are vain.
My ſoul contemns them all!

AMASIS.

By Egypt's gods,
Thou'rt ſovereign of my heart! the full extent
Of all my wiſhes!—High, in regal ſtate,
Thou ſhalt command the nations. Princes, kings,
The Nile, the ocean, to thy feet ſhall bring
Their yearly tribute. Still my ſoul ſhall dwell
On thy perfections. Love ſhall crown our days
With joy, with tranſport—— *(ſeizing her.*

SETHONA.

Spare me, Amaſis!
I beg not for my life. I wiſh to die:
But if my tears, my prayers can move thy heart,
O let my wearied ſoul forſake the world,
In all its native innocence.

AMASIS.

Ariſe,
Ariſe, Sethona! Doſt thou think my love
A ſpark, to be extinguiſh'd by a tear?

A flame, to be blown out with ſobs and ſighs?
A ſoft impreſſion, melted by the breath
Of pity? No——And wouldſt thou not deſpiſe
Such cold affection? Soon, within my arms,
Thy ſtrange averſion ſhall be chang'd to love,
And thou ſhalt wonder at thy own perverſeneſs.

SETHONA.

No——never! never!

AMASIS.

To the altar!

SETHONA.

Here——
Here let me periſh——

AMASIS.

Thus I bear thee hence!

SETHONA.

Inhuman man! to-morrow——

AMASIS.

No——this hour——
This moment!

SETHONA.

Tyrant——I will not betray
My faith to Menes!

AMASIS.

Menes is no more!

SETHONA.

Then grant this hour to grief——

AMASIS.

Thou plead'ſt in vain;
In vain thou ſtriv'ſt——away——

SETHONA. *(fainting.)*

O Menes, Menes!

AMA-

AMASIS.

Ha! whence this paleneſs? This is no deceit:
The blood retires. A tranſitory death
O'erwhelms her ſenſes.——Bear her to our halls!
[*Amaſis and Attendants lead her out.*]

Enter MENES *ſuddenly*, ORUS *following*.

ORUS.

Menes, forbear!

MENES.

It was Sethona's voice!

ORUS.

Raſh youth! thy frenzy ruins all our hopes.

MENES.

As well thou might'ſt oppoſe the bolt of Jove,
Wing'd with his wrath. Away---left in my rage
Thou too ſhould'ſt periſh.

ORUS.

Tread on my grey hairs,
I will not quit thee. Wherefore would'ſt thou ruſh
On certain death, and, in an evil hour,
Deſtroy the work of years, the fruit of all
Our expectations? Let not rage prevail----
A certain death, without revenge, attends
Thy raſhneſs. Stay, this night, this very hour,
May crown thy hopes.

MENES.

This moment fills my ſoul
With mortal anguiſh. In a ſtate like mine
It were a crime to liſten to the voice
Of prudence.---Wherefore thus obſtruct my courſe?
Since full revenge is my determin'd aim,
Truſt to my conduct.

ORUS.

Whilſt this ſtorm of rage
Darkens thy reaſon, hence thou ſhalt not ſtir.
Doſt thou deſpiſe my council?---Haſt thou loſt
All reverence for my friendſhip, for my age,
And ſacred function? Is the life I ſaved
Unworthy of thy gratitude---thy care?---
Young man, this frenzy ſuits not with thy fame.
A nobler paſſion now demands thy ſword:
Egypt, amidſt her tears, looks up to thee,
Her only hope! Not Amaſis alone
Muſt periſh, Tyranny itſelf muſt fall.

MENES.

What noble purpoſe labours in thy mind?
I ſtand prepar'd. Orus, command my ſword,
My life, my fame; but firſt let me behold
Sethona. In this moment of deſpair,
She may be loſt for ever!

ORUS.

Danger lies
Between thee and thy wiſhes: Yet to calm
This tempeſt of thy ſoul, a faithful ſlave,
At my requeſt, ſhall quickly guide thy ſteps
Through the deſerted paſſage, form'd of old
By kings, who lov'd in ſecret to approach
The gods. But let not idle dreams of love
Enſnare thee by delay. With ſpeed return
To hear, to execute a great deſign.

MENES.

Whate'er thy wiſdom plans, is deem'd by me
The will of heav'n.

ORUS.

Too long thou tarry'ſt here.
This is no place of ſafety. Mœris ſoon

Shall lead thee to Sethona. In thy cell
A moment wait. By my command, the ſlave
Shall there attend thee.

MENES.

Neareſt to the gods!
To thee I truſt to ſave a dearer life
Than this which now I owe thee. To direct
My ſteps to glory, to revenge; to rouſe
The warlike genius of our native land;
Arm'd with the wrath of heav'n to cruſh the pow'r
Of Amaſis, and level in the duſt
Thoſe maſſy fabricks, which his pride has rais'd.

[*Exit* Menes.

ORUS, *alone.*

O that this night were paſt! and Seraphis
Again eſtabliſhed on his ancient throne!
'Till then, I muſt not tell this gallant youth,
His high deſcent; that he, as Sethos' ſon,
Is nephew to the king, and Egypt's heir.
His headlong fury breaks through my deſigns.
I muſt invent ſome ſcheme to check his rage,
And ſtop the progreſs of his ill-tim'd love,
'Till from his throne uſurp'd the tyrant falls.
Why ſtays Otanes thus? Conſpiracies,
Like thunder clouds, ſhould, in a moment, form
And ſtrike, like lightning, 'ere the ſound is heard.

END *of the* FIRST ACT.

ACT II.

SCENE, SETHONA's *Apartment.*

SETHONA. *Entring in terror.*

SETHONA.

HE finds no rest in death! It bore the form
Of Menes! Dimly he aroſe thro' night!
He ſtood in ſilence! He purſues my ſteps!
Here I am left alone! My voice of grief,
Invades his dark repoſe! Again—he comes!

Enter MENES.

Thou awful ſhade, retire!

MENES.

Away with fear!

SETHONA.

'Tis he!—'Tis he himſelf!

MENES.

My ſoul's delight!
Once more I claſp thee to my panting breaſt.
This, this is more than joy!

SETHONA.

Where haſt thou been?

MENES.

MENES.

Compose thy mind a while——

SETHONA.

Since thou art safe,
Why should I question farther?

MENES.

Thou shalt hear,
But let not grief affect thy tender mind,
Or throw a damp upon this hour of joy.

SETHONA.

Of joy, indeed! That gives me back my love!
Where hast thou been? Oh, Menes, tell me where?
I will be calm—but let me hear it all.

MENES.

That day, on which we stood before the gods,
With willing vows, to consecrate our loves,
The tyrant's guards assaulted me unarm'd,
And tore me from Osiris and from thee.
Thro' paths unknown, they led me to a cell,
Cast me in chains; then raising from the floor
A pond'rous marble, to my view disclos'd
A dark deep pit, a dreary sepulchre!
Headlong they threw me down, to dwell with night,
Famine and horror, solitude and death!

SETHONA.

O dreadful state!

MENES.

Cold, bruis'd, disconsolate,
With fetters gall'd, with mortal anguish torn,
I lay, resign'd to destiny.

SETHONA.

Ye gods!

MENES.

MENES.

Then riſing up, I crept along the walls,
From place to place, and often in my arms,
Embrac'd th' embalm'd dead! Thro' many a cell
I wander'd cheerleſs. When a hollow ſound
Roll'd murmuring thro' the tombs. I wiſh'd again
For ſilence—by degrees the noiſe approach'd——

SETHONA.

Approach'd!

MENES.

And ſoon a ray of livid light
Shot thro' the darkneſs. Then a form appear'd,
That ſeem'd not mortal, clad in veſtments pure
As heav'n's meridian beam. His beard was white,
And pale his aged viſage, faintly ſeen
By the blue taper, in his trembling hand.
Tow'rd me he mov'd; then claſpt me in his arms,
And welcom'd me to liberty and life.——
I knew him then for Orus.

SETHONA.

Happy ſight!
What brought him thither?

MENES.

Oft, at dead of night,
He viſits his great anceſtors. Releas'd
From all my chains. I trod his cautious path.
Thro' winding ways, he led me to the fane
Of great Oſiris. Where I ſcarce had ſtood
An hour conceal'd, when by thy voice alarm'd
I ruſh'd to ſave thee!

SETHONA.

Still my fears intrude

Upon

Upon my joys. Is Amasis inform'd
Of thy escape from death?

MENES.

He knows it not.

SETHONA.

How cam'st thou hither? Didst thou pass unseen,
Unknown by all?

MENES.

My steps to thee were led
By faithful Mæris.

SETHONA.

We're betray'd and lost!
He, with the times, has chang'd. Our sorrows all
Proceed from Mæris. When before the gods
We pledg'd our vows of love, to Amasis
He bore the grateful secret, and receiv'd
The price of perfidy. While yet I speak,
Thy late escape is to his ear convey'd.
This fatal hour the tyrant's vengeance falls
Again upon thee, Menes! Thou must fly,
And leave me to my fate.

MENES.

Thou do'st not mean
To wound my honour in the tenderest part,
By the proposal of a deed so base?
It must not be—Our fate has made us one,
And what but death can part us?

SETHONA.

Blame me not,
If my affection and my fears advis'd
The only means of safety.

MENES.

Trust the gods,
Nor think of danger.

SETHONA.

Think not that I fear,
The utmoſt rage of ſtern adverſity,
Whilſt thou art left. With thee I could be bleſs'd,
Wreck'd on a pointed ſolitary rock,
Tho' loud thro' night the ſpirits of the ſtorm
Howl'd on the hoary deep.

MENES.

That ſmile alone
Wou'd calm the tempeſts rage. Where'er thou art,
There dwells my joy. A ray divine is pour'd
From heav'n around thee, Sympathy of ſoul,
And finer feelings than the plant that ſhrinks,
From the light contact of an inſect's wing,
Diſtinguiſh thee——

Enter an OFFICER, *with a Guard.*

OFFICER.

The king commands that Menes may be ſeiz'd,
For crimes of treaſon.

SETHONA.

Ruin! Death enſues!

MENES.

For treaſon? Hence! or this my ſword——

SETHONA.

Alas!

OFFICER.

Put up thy ſword. Thy raſhneſs nought avails.

MENES.

'Tis better now to die in arms, than fall
Defenceleſs, unreveng'd, by bloody ſlaves,
That murder in the dark. I will not yield.
Retreat, or periſh.

OFFI-

OFFICER.

Rush upon him——

MENES.

Death
Awaits the man who dares advance——

SETHONA.

O heaven!
O Menes, yield!

OFFICER.

Why grasp ye thus your swords,
Yet look so pale? the orders of the king
Are death, shou'd he resist.

MENES.

Then welcome death!
When dire necessity presents the choice,
Of death, or of dishonour.

Enter OTANES *and interposes.*

OTANES.

Sheath your swords!

OFFICER.

Then must Otanes answer to the king
For Menes.

OTANES.

Soldier, hence!

OFFICER.

Thy power must stand
Between us and his rage.

OTANES.

It shall—away—— [*Exit Officer.*

MENES.

Otanes!

OTANES.

Prop of my declining years!
Reſtor'd to bleſs my arms!

MENES.

Reſtor'd to prove
New cauſe of ſorrow.

OTANES.

Fear it not, the gods
Are our protectors: Why in tears, Sethona?

SETHONA.

Didſt thou not ſee theſe miniſters of death?

OTANES.

Give wing to hope. She cannot ſoar too high,
In this deciſive moment of thy fate.
But Amaſis may come. A while retire,
I muſt confer with Menes. Baniſh fear;
Our laſt reſolves ſhall be convey'd to thee.

SETHONA.

Thy words reſtore me from the wild abyſs
Of horror and deſpair. May all the gods
Confirm thy hopes and proſper thy deſigns.

[*Exit Sethona.*

OTANES.

Menes, thou know'ſt that with paternal care
I rear'd thy infancy and train'd thy youth
To arms; with joy, from year to year, beheld
Thy ardent ſpirit kindling, as it flew,
To deeds of glory. Often in the field
I prov'd thy courage. Now the time is come
To prove thy fortitude. Thou muſt reſign
Sethona to the king; or inſtant death
Awaits thy diſobedience.

MENES.

MENES.

Ha! what means
Otanes? Yield Sethona! prove, at once,
False to my vows, a traitor to my love,
Detested, lost, dishonour'd! He that once
Falls, in his own opinion, falls indeed!
But he, that's conscious of his virtue, stands
Unmov'd, the pressure of an adverse world.

OTANES.

Menes, in any other cause but this,
Such noble sentiments I would approve;
But love awhile, must give a place to deeds
Of death or fame. This night I mean to raise
A King in Egypt, and subvert the throne
Of the usurper.

MENES.

Shall it be to night?

OTANES.

To night. The enterprize is plann'd and ripe
For execution.

MENES.

When the tyrant falls,
Say, who shall reign in Egypt?

OTANES.

Seraphis?
The lov'd, the lawful sovereign of the land;
Whose virtues equal his descent divine;
And, through the cloud of his misfortune, dart
A ray of glory round him.

MENES.

Seraphis!
What do I hear? he perish'd in the Nile!

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MENES.

Seraphis!
What do I hear? he perish'd in the Nile!

OTANES.

OTANES.

So Fame reports. But ſtill the monarch lives.
To-day from Ethiopia, in diſguiſe,
He is return'd. There long he lay conceal'd,
A hermit in the deſert. Stand prepar'd.
Our friends already fit their armour on,
And graſp their ſwords, with elevated hopes
Of glory and revenge! At my requeſt,
Ciphrenus, who commands the eaſtern gate,
Fronting the royal palace, will admit
A powerful ſquadron, that, out flying Fame,
Advance from Säis. Orus, too, convenes
Some bold conſpirators, within the walls.

MENES.

Where do they meet in arms?

OTANES.

At Ceops' tomb!——

Enter AMASIS, *(ſuddenly.)*

AMASIS.

Is Menes not in chains?

OTANES.

O King, forgive
A crime that ſprung from error, not deſign.

AMASIS.

From error—no! his crude ambition points
At Egypt's throne in fair Sethona's right.

OTANES.

He ne'er could cheriſh ſuch ambitious hopes,
A youth of humble name.

AMASIS.

Whence is he ſprung?

OTANES,

OTANES.

His sire in Seraphis's court was train'd,
A man of virtue, though to fame unknown.
The gods bear witness, how my soul abhors
This fatal union. When, at Saïs, first
His private purpose reach'd mine ear, to thee
With speed the fatal secret I convey'd.

AMASIS.

Thou didst, Otanes, and by that confirm'd
Thy prudence and unshaken faith to me!
Yet such a crime, in Menes, merits death.

OTANES.

May I not plead!——

AMASIS.

Away, tis all in vain.
With fraudful arts, he won Sethona's soul:
Sethona, whom we lov'd and long design'd
To grace our royal bed, to reconcile
The minds of factious subjects to our throne.

MENES.

I lov'd Sethona! she return'd my love;
Now she is mine, by all the holiest vows,
And would not violate, her plighted faith,
To share thy throne!

OTANES.

Menes, what rage!——

AMASIS.

Is thine!
Thy insolence!——thy folly!

MENES.

Art not thou
The guardian of the laws? And not the rod
Of vile oppression.—'Tis not meet that kings

Shou'd

Shou'd break the chain, by which they bind mankind
And ſhew the world examples of injuſtice.

AMASIS.

Preſumptuous man!—this inſtant let him die!

MENES. *(putting his hand to his ſword.)*

Away! ye ſlaves or death——

OTANES. *(aſide.)*

All,—all is loſt!
O Menes, Menes! thou haſt ruin'd all.
Remember, ah! remember. Yield thy ſword *(aloud)*
Dar'ſt thou oppoſe thy ſovereign? Dar'ſt thou raiſe
Thy ſword againſt Otanes?

MENES.

I ſubmit.
My life is in thy hands

AMASIS.

Let him be led
To publick execution. Let mankind
Learn from his fate, their duty to the throne.

(Menes is carried off.

OTANES. *(kneeling.)*

My king! my ſovereign, hear me!

AMASIS.

Ceaſe old man!
Would'ſt thou avoid our rage, forbear to plead
The cauſe of treaſon. Hence! I'll hear no more!

[*Exit.*

OTANES.

Confuſion! ruin! his unbridled rage
Has drawn the tyrant's vengeance on his head,
'Ere all our friends are arm'd. What now remains!

Enter

Enter SETHONA.

SETHONA.

Gone, gone for ever! They have torn him from me!
Hark! was not that his voice?

OTANES.

I heard it not.

SETHONA.

It is! it is!

OTANES.

No whiſper ſtirs the air;
Thy grief perverts thy ſenſes. Still the pow'r
Is thine to ſave him.

SETHONA.

Ha! what power is mine?

OTANES.

Conſent to wed the king.

SETHONA.

To wed the king!——

OTANES.

His death ſhall free thee, 'ere the nuptial rites
Can be perform'd: A bold conſpiracy
Is pointed at his life. This hour he falls!

SETHONA.

This very hour! ye gods!

OTANES.

Confide in me.
Feign full ſubmiſſion; on thy knees implore
His clemency. Thy honour ſhall remain
Safe and inviolate.

SETHONA.

Thy plot may fail!

OTANES.

It reſts with thee.

SETHONA.

With me it ſhall not reſt.

Enter AMASIS.

AMASIS.

What doſt thou here, Sethona? why in tears?
Why art thou thus the conſtant prey of grief,
When joy prevails around?

SETHONA.

Why doſt thou aſk?
Oh, pardon Menes! ſpare him, Amaſis!
Or give me inſtant death.

AMASIS.

Thy death to me
Were more ſupportable than thy diſdain.

SETHONA.

Then 'tis decreed: The hour that Menes falls,
Shall be my laſt.

AMASIS.

This tempeſt of my ſoul,
Which you, like ſome malicious goddeſs, rais'd
To wreck my peace, ſhall overwhelm you both,
Since you muſt ſink together. *(going.)*

OTANES, *(aſide.)*

Sooth his rage;
Menes muſt periſh, all our ſchemes muſt fail,
Should'ſt thou not flatter him with hopes of love.

SETHONA.

Still hear me, Amaſis!

AMASIS.

Of this no more.

SETHONA.

Alas! what happineſs can'ſt thou propoſe
By haſtning my compliance: Time might work
A change in my affections. Generous minds
Diſdain a cold return; and ſtill derive
Their greateſt joys, from thoſe which they confer.

AMASIS.

Perſuaſive woman! Know my pride, that brooks
Not oppoſition, fires my boſom more
Than all thy boaſted charms; nor can the flame
Be quench'd but with his blood. Haſte, let him die!

SETHONA, *(kneeling.)*

Stop, cruel man! O, Amaſis, revoke
The fatal ſentence! let thy heart relent,
I will be grateful.

AMASIS.

It is now too late:
The power is mine.

SETHONA.

Then uſe it like the gods,
In mercy.

AMASIS.

In the puniſhment of crimes!

SETHONA.

Is there no hope?

AMASIS.

No—none!

SETHONA.

What would'ſt thou have?

AMASIS.

I aſk thee nothing.

SETHONA.

Am I then ſo poor,
So abject in thine eyes?

AMASIS.

No more!—arife,
Leave me, Sethona!

SETHONA.

Doſt thou mean to ſtain
Thy nuptial hour with murder?

AMASIS.

Urge me not,
'Tis weakneſs thus to hear thee.

SETHONA.

On that hour
Doſt thou refuſe one poor requeſt!

AMASIS.

Command
The wealth, the power of Egypt.

SETHONA.

Wealth and pow'r
Will now avail me nothing. Are thy fears
So great? Does Menes——

AMASIS.

Fears! We know no fears;
Protected by our valour, by our pow'r,
Our mind remains unſhaken as our throne.
Once more to gratify thy will, to ſhew
Our juſt contempt of Menes, ſet him free.
(to his guards.
Nay,

Nay, let him join the foe, dispute the field.
Then shalt thou see, that Amasis excels *(to Sethona.)*
Alike in arms, in honour and in fame.
Call Menes hither. *(to his guards)*

OTANES.

Wherefore shou'd the king
Thus condescend! His madness, his despair
May still insult thy clemency——

AMASIS.

Away!
Let him approach.

OTANES.

Sethona, leave this place.
Yield to the pressure of the present hour.
Bend to the tyrant's wrath. Seem to consent.
Obey my words. Depart.

SETHONA.

How hard to feign
In love like mine! He comes——

Enter MENES.

AMASIS.

Bold youth, advance.
Sethona, yielding to our love, redeems
Thy life, but fly beyond our spacious realms,
Or we revoke our mercy.

MENES.

Speak, Sethona!
She turns from me in silence. Bear me back
To death. [*Exit Sethona.*

AMASIS.

AMASIS.

Thy doom is fix'd. Thou'rt baniſh'd from this hour.
Sethona wills it, and her will is fate.
Guards, bear him hence, without the palace gates
Strike off his chains—and ſhou'd he loiter here——
By all the gods, that guard our throne, he dies.
[*Exit.*

MENES.

Am I awake? Undone. Forever loſt!
O woman, born to change! are theſe her vows?
A deſperate purpoſe labours in my breaſt;
I'll blaſt their rites, throw death amidſt their joys,
And whelm'd beneath the ruin, leave my woes.

END *of the* SECOND ACT.

ACT III.

SETHONA's *Apartment.*

Enter MENES.

MENES.

THIS ſecret path, which led me once to joy,
Now miniſters to vengeance. From the fane
Unſeen, unheard, I have emerg'd to light,
Like ſome diſaſtrous pow'r on dark deſigns,
What doubt remains? O jealouſy! I feel,
I feel thy ſerpent-tooth! Thou torturing fiend!
Thy rage ſome dreadful ſacrifice demands.

Enter ORUS.

ORUS.

Menes, why tarry here? Our gallant friends,
Already met, now graſp their eager ſwords,
To free devoted Egypt. Thee they call
To lead them on.

MENES.

Away, I claim no aid
To favour my revenge: No tedious forms
Of war, or ſlow conſpiracy. My wrongs
Ariſe, like armies, round me. This my ſword
Shall quickly daſh the tyrant's hopes of joy.

ORUS.

What frenzy fires thy mind, when thouſands wait
To join their valour and their hopes with thine?

MENES.

MENES.

Whilſt they prepare, my purpoſe muſt be loſt,
The tyrant triumphs in Sethona's love.
My ſwelling ſoul ſome enterpriſe demands,
Great with uncommon danger, longs to ruſh,
And pour the tyrant's blood around his throne.

ORUS.

Some demon, hoſtile to our cauſe, inſpires
Thy frantic mind to ruin all our hopes;
To quit the certain proſpect of revenge,
And give Sethona to the tyrant's arms.

MENES.

Ha! name her not. To thee I owe my life.
Oh! ſhew me now the nobleſt path to death.
Preſerve my fame—myſelf thou muſt not ſave.

ORUS.

Then join thy friends. It is the nobleſt path
To fame, the ſureſt to obtain revenge.
Lead on the war. Let conduct be combin'd
With valour. Amaſis, tho' unprepar'd,
Has great reſources in his active breaſt,
And fortitude approv'd.

MENES.

The boldeſt courſe
To vengeance is the beſt. The glorious ſhock
Of arms, to which thy cooler counſel leads,
Is ſuited to my ſoul. I'll join our friends,
And lead the battle, 'till theſe lofty towers,
Theſe palaces, theſe temples of the gods,
Shall mark the greatneſs of my rage with ruin.

[*Exit Menes.*

ORUS.

As yet an hour remains. The nuptial rites
Are not begun. I fear his headlong rage

Will

Will drive him on, e'er the appointed time,
E'er all our friends, like long impriſon'd winds,
At once from different quarters, ruſhing forth
Begin deſtruction. Ha! what aged form
Moves ſlowly hither? Do my eyes deceive?
Or is it Seraphis? Defend him, gods!

Enter SERAPHIS.

O king, beware! Alas, what weighty cauſe
Provokes this danger?

SERAPHIS.

Shall my only hope
Be thus diſhonour'd? Shall ſhe meanly ſtoop
To wed the baſe uſurper of my throne?
No: rather let deſtruction whelm our houſe,
And leave no monument of their diſgrace
In Egypt.

ORUS.

Seraphis, thy friends are arm'd.
The nuptials muſt proceed. The feſtive hour
Will favour our deſigns, and baniſh thought
From the pervading mind of Amaſis.
Menes advances. On his ſword depends
At once our fortune, and thy daughter's fate.
Retire to ſafety.

SERAPHIS.

Yet this very hour,
Perhaps this moment, hurries her along
To foul diſhonour. Shall I offer up
So fair a victim, for a doubtful point
Of policy? like ſome devoted prey,
Shall ſhe be thus deſerted, to allure
The ſavage to our toils? ſhall not my eyes
Behold her, e'er the buſy hand of death,
May cloſe them up for ever?

ORUS.

Yet my fears.
Should Amasis——

SERAPHIS.

No danger shall withhold
My steps from where my honour, where my fame
Demand my presence. In this low disguise,
This sacred character, that finds access
Unquestion'd to the privacy of kings,
I will approach Sethona, will preserve
My child from Amasis, and stand prepar'd
To join my friends, when their victorious arms
Approach.

ORUS.

All ye gods, preserve,
Protect my sovereign! I will soon convey
Thy high commands to Menes. [*Exit Orus.*

SERAPHIS.

Guide my steps,
Thou great Osiris!

Enter SETHONA.

SETHONA.

Lost! I am betray'd,
Press'd to the verge of ruin, cover'd o'er
With guilt, with shame, with horror, with remorse,
Deserted, sunk, forlorn!

SERAPHIS. *(aside.)*

It is my child!
My daughter!

SETHONA.

Wherefore do I drag this life
Of misery, as if I fear'd to die;
Or that the deep dark mansions of the grave

Cou'd not afford a refuge from my woes.
I will not tarry here. Ha! who art thou?

SERAPHIS. *(aside.)*

This boſom tells me——

SETHONA.

Venerable ſage!
Intrude not on my ſorrows. Now I hold
No converſe, or with wiſdom or the wiſe,
Deſpair and terror, ſolitude and grief,
Are my companions. *(going.*

SERAPHIS.

Yet with patience hear——

SETHONA.

Who talks of patience in the ear of grief?
But recommends the good we cannot find.
Ah! whither ſhall I fly? Who can protect
My innocence?

SERAPHIS.

The gods.

SETHONA.

The gods, alas!
Have left me to my woes.

SERAPHIS.

Art thou not ſoon
To be a queen?

SETHONA.

To be no more.

SERAPHIS.

Alas!
I dare not blame thee.

SETHONA.

Wherefore doſt thou weep?

The ſcourge of years, thro' this deteſted world,
Has not depriv'd thy tender heart of pity.

SERAPHIS.

Too much I feel. ——

SETHONA.

Does not thy age afford
A refuge from affliction?

SERAPHIS.

None. Theſe hairs
Have long been whitening in the winds of heav'n,
Yet now I bend beneath a load of care,
That ſtill augmenting ſinks me to the grave.

SETHONA.

O, could I give thee comfort.—Thou art poor.
Fortune has left me nothing.

SERAPHIS.

Yet on thee
My only hope depends.

SETHONA.

Take, take my all,
My pity——

SERAPHIS.

'Tis too much—give me thy hand
That I may bleſs thee. All ye gracious powers,
Look down!——

SETHONA.

Thou good old man, why thus partake
In my affliction? Wherefore gaze upon me?

SERAPHIS.

Such was thy mother's beauty in her prime.

SETHONA.

My mother!

SERAPHIS.

SERAPHIS.

Yes—thy mother!

SETHONA.

Didſt thou know
The queen of Egypt?

SERAPHIS.

Ah! this boſom ſtill
Retains her image.

SETHONA.

In thy poverty,
I might have read our fortune. Thou haſt ſerv'd
My father to thy ruin!

SERAPHIS.

Can'ſt thou told
A ſecret in thy breaſt?

SETHONA.

A ſecret!

SERAPHIS.

Yes.
Call forth thy reſolution.

SETHONA.

Ha! What ſtrong
Emotions ſwell thy breaſt?

SERAPHIS.

My heart will burſt.

SETHONA.

Why doſt thou tremble?

SERAPHIS.

All my ſtrength has fail'd.

SETHONA.

The weight of years is on thee. Small my ſtrength,
Yet thou ſhall be ſupported, poor old man!

SERAPHIS.

SERAPHIS.

Come to my arms, thou deareſt to my ſoul,
I am——

SETHONA.

Who art thou? Speak!——

SERAPHIS.

It is too late. (*Flouriſh.*

SETOHNA.

Unfold thyſelf.—Thou ſhalt not thus depart.

Enter AMASIS *and* OTANES.

AMASIS.

Sethona, ſtill in tears? Why this delay?
With whom doſt thou ſo earneſtly confer?
Who and from whence art thou?

OTANES.

Diſtraction! ruin! (*aſide.*
His name is Pheron.

AMASIS.

Some divining prieſt,
Charg'd with falſe oracles.

SETHONA.

Upbraid him not,
His only crime is poverty, which throws,
In ſuch a venerable form, reproach
On thee and fortune. Pheron I wou'd ſpeak
With thee in ſecret.

AMASIS.

When the god of love
Is hovering o'er the altar, and prepares
To crown our vows with joy? Lead on.

SETHONA.

SETHONA.

In vain
Thou ſtriv'ſt to bear me hence. My ſoul is mov'd
By this unhappy ſtranger. He has ſerv'd
My father. Pheron, tell me all thy tale.

OTANES.

He may attend to-morrow——

SETHONA.

No, Otanes!
A virtuous deed ſhould never be delay'd.
The impulſe comes from heav'n, and he who ſtrives
A moment to repreſs it, diſobeys
The god within the mind.

SERAPAIS.

Now, bent with age,
And creeping to my grave, my wants are few,
But not the leſs my gratitude.—To me,
My own reflections prove a full reward,
For all the good that threeſcore years and ten,
Have put within my power; nor do my crimes
Darken my eye of life.

AMASIS.

From whence art thou?

SERAPHIS.

That day on which inconſtant fortune fled
The ſtandard of the king, wedg'd in the flight
Of an inglorious ſquadron, I was borne
Unwillingly from death.—The burning climes
Of Ethiopia have been ſince my home;
At length deſirous of a quiet grave
Among my kindred, in my native land,
I ventur'd to return, and now reſign
Myſelf with joys to the decrees of heav'n.

AMASIS.

AMASIS.

His looks appear familiar to my eyes,
Nor ſeems his voice unknown.

SERAPHIS.

In former times,
I was not here a ſtranger.

OTANES. *(aſide.)*

Now my fears
Preſs hard upon me—Gods!

AMASIS.

Art thou not ſent
From th' Ethiopian camp, to ſpy the ſtate
Of Memphis?

SETHONA.

Nothing wounds an honeſt mind,
Like undeſerv'd ſuſpicion.

AMASIS.

He recals
The memory of thy father.

OTANES.

All is loſt! *(aſide.*

SETHONA.

The memory of my father! let me trace,
Thoſe venerable features that recal
The ſad remembrance of the beſt of kings.

AMASIS.

Thouſands beheld him ſinking in the Nile,
And yet I could ſuſpect——

Enter MYRTÆUS. *(haſtily.)*

MYRTÆUS.

O king, thy ſlave
Has an important ſecret for thine ear.

AMASIS.

AMASIS.

Thou ſhalt be heard—Otanes, lead him hence,
In ſecret queſtion him, and ſearch his ſoul. [*Exit.*

SETHONA. *(to Otanes.)*

Befriend the hapleſs. To the ag'd be kind.
Pity demands of thee, with double claim,
To ſave this guiltleſs ſtranger from his foes.
[*Exit.*

AMASIS. *(advancing with Myrtæus.)*

Speak, brave Myrtæus!

MYRTÆUS.

A conſpiracy,
This hour is form'd againſt thy crown and life.
While yet I ſpeak they come.

AMASIS.

Ha! who are theſe
Who league with Ethiopia? Dare the ſlaves
Whom favour rais'd, rebel againſt their Lord?

MYRTÆUS.

The dark deſign, in partial whiſpers came
This inſtant to mine ear.—Some daring chiefs
Are arming round the palace, and conſpire
To place ſome other ſovereign on the throne.

AMASIS.

Haſte, rouſe the ſtrength of Memphis. Let our guards
Be chang'd; the traitors ſeiz'd; the gates ſecur'd;
A choſen ſquadron of our braveſt troops
Reſerv'd to guard us.

MYRTÆUS.

'Tis already done.

Enter an OFFICER.

OFFICER.

To arms, to arms! the foes already ſhake
The pow'r of Memphis, bear our ſquadrons down,
And now advance, with Menes at their head.

AMASIS.

What force remains?

OFFICER.

Some troops are ſtill in arms.

AMASIS.

And ſo is Amaſis. We lead them on. [*Exit.*

Enter SETHONA.

(*Thunder and ſhouts at a diſtance.*)

SETHONA.

O what a night of horror! now the moon
Is darkn'd in eclipſe. The air is fill'd
With ſtreaming meteors. Murm'ring thunder rolls.
The broad firm earth ſhakes with the tread of hoſts,
That murder in the dark. The groans of death
Roll on the winds of heaven. Ye gods, look down,
Protect our cauſe! Let Menes' ſword prevail
(*ſhouts increaſe.*)
Again! It is the ſtorm of war and death!
Who can ſurvive the conflict?

Enter ORUS. (*in terror.*)

ORUS.

All is loſt!

SETHONA.

Speak; tell me all!

ORUS.

ORUS.

Our friends retreat:

SETHONA.

Alas!

ORUS.

I fear, I fear, the aged king is ſlain!

SETHONA.

What aged king?

ORUS.

Thy father, Seraphis!

SETHONA.

My father! Whether does thy frenzy lead,
To tell me now, what many years have told?

ORUS.

This very inſtant he led on the war.

SETHONA.

Thy fears diſtract thee!

ORUS.

Yes, my fears are great,
But I poſſeſs my reaſon. Seraphis,
Thy father, liv'd amid the ſtrife of arms,
This hour, in Memphis. Long he lay conceal'd
In Ethiopia, thence of late return'd
In poverty's diſguiſe, to fall, in age,
By the victorious arms of Amaſis.

SETHONA.

Is nature chang'd? Or do my ſenſes ſtray
In the wild mazes of a troubled dream,
Where all is wonder? Woe ſucceeds to woe!
The dead mix with the living, and the work
Of years is crouded in a ſingle hour:
It cannot be! Alas, too ſure I wake!
O that I now could ſleep to wake no more!

ORUS.

Ye gods of Egypt, ſoothe her mind to peace!

SETHONA.

The aged hermit was the king himſelf!
My father Seraphis! O had I known
That, on my knees I might have kiſs'd his feet,
And have receiv'd the bleſſings of a parent.
All——all is ſilent—Menes too has fall'n!
My fate is dark around me. Farewel, Orus.
[*Exit Orus.*
Forſaken, unprepar'd, weary of life,
Oppreſs'd with woes, above my failing ſtrength,
My limbs will not ſupport me. O'er my eyes
A cloud of darkneſs falls. The hated world
Fades on my ſight. The clay-cold hand of death
Is heavy on my heart. Here let me reſt,
(*falls on a couch.*
And take my leave of ſorrow. Sacred light!
Ah! whether doſt thou fly! Depart, ye ſhades,
Croud not upon my ſoul! (*faints.*

Enter MENES.

MENES.

My coward friends are fled. Diſhonour, ſhame,
And ruin follow them. Ha! there ſhe lies!
She ſeems to ſleep. Deſpair, revenge, inſpire
My ſoul with deadly rage. Do odours breathe
From ſuch a poiſonous plant? Does innocence
Pour divine radiance on the face of guilt?
She ſmiles! She dreams of joy! I'll turn aſide
My eyes, leaſt courage fail. I cannot err——
O that the deed were done!——
My hand ſhakes, my limbs totter, the warm blood
Already ſtreams upon me. At my heart,
I feel the dagger's point. Horrid revenge!
Give, give me reſolution.

SETHONA. *(recovers.)*

Menes! Ha!
A dagger—ſtrike!——

MENES.

Call——call not back to light
Theſe ſinking furies.

SETHONA.

In thoſe deadly frowns,
Thoſe looks of horror, I perceive my fate;
Thy adverſe fortune. Amaſis prevails.
Strike. Save my honour, and thy own.

MENES.

Thy honour!

SETHONA.

Now I am loſt indeed! Let thy revenge,
Thy rage, have ſcope. I have deſerv'd it all!

MENES.

Doſt thou repent!

SETHONA.

Alas! the gods themſelves
Can grant me nothing, when condemn'd by thee;
Then give me death.

MENES.

What! didſt thou not conſent
To wed the tyrant?

SETHONA.

Ha! to wed the tyrant?
Could'ſt thou ſuſpect me of that baſe deſign?
Alas, I've lov'd in vain! To ſave thy life,
I feign'd ſubmiſſion to the tyrant's will;
My purpoſe gain'd, I meant to loſe my own.

MENES.

MENES. *(throws away the dagger, and kneels.)*

O that my death could half redreſs thy wrongs!
Throw, ſpurn me from thy feet! my guilt, my crimes,
Exceeds forgiveneſs! horror, rage, remorſe,
Torment a wretch, unworthy to poſſeſs
Virtue, that ſeems to emulate the gods!

SETHONA.

Menes, ariſe! I know thou wert deceiv'd!

MENES.

Doſt thou embrace me?

SETHONA.

Never more to part.

MENES.

No, never more! Then let me lead thee hence,
Through the loud tumult of this fatal night,
To the dark caves of death; thoſe dreary cells,
Where Egypt's monarchs lie. There all our friends
Retreat for ſafety.

SETHONA.

I will follow thee,
As if the gods of Egypt led the way.
Protected by thy arm, I know no fear;
But where thou art not, terror whelms my ſoul.

END *of the* THIRD ACT.

ACT IV.

SCENE, *the* CATACOMBS.

SERAPHIS.

THIS is the houſe of death! The dreary tomb
Of Egypt's ancient kings! What now remains
Of all their glory, but theſe mould'ring piles,
And theſe imperfect, mutilated forms
Of what they were? The period of my fate
Will ſoon be clos'd. An undiſtinguiſh'd blank,
Perhaps ſucceeds. What then? To know it not,
Is not to be unhappy. Yet the ſoul
Looks thro' the gloomy portal of the grave,
To happier ſcenes of immortality.
O let not ſuch a pleaſing hope be vain!
Eternity, thou awful gulph of time,
This wide creation on thy ſurface floats.
Of life—of death—what is, or what ſhall be,
I nothing know. The world is all a dream,
The conſciouſneſs of ſomething that exiſts,
Yet is not what it ſeems. Then what am I?
Death muſt unfold the myſtery!

Enter OTANES.

OTANES.

My king!

SERAPHIS.

My friend, Otanes.

OTANES.

OTANES.

Still misfortune pours
Her ſtorms upon us. What remains?

SERAPHIS.

To die!

OTANES.

Be that the laſt reſource of our deſpair.
Some friends ſurround us.

SERAPHIS.

Vain are all our hopes.
When, in full ſail, conſpiracy receives
An unexpected ſhock, it ſplits, it ſinks,
To riſe no more!

OTANES.

Tho' death has thin'd our ranks,
Thouſands remain.

SERAPHIS.

Thoſe lions, that had broke
Their chains to range at large, now trembling, hear
Their keeper's voice; and diffident of ſtrength,
Crouch to the laſh. My hopes are all cut off
In Menes. O had I beheld my ſon!

OTANES. *(aſide.)*

'Tis well. He knows not that he has no ſon.
Orus has nought diſclos'd. His ſtate requires
The ſecret ſhou'd be kept.—He ſtill ſurvives,
[*To Seraphis.*
Like the immortal ſpirit of a ſtorm,
Who ſtirs with joy the elements to war,
And ſtrides amidſt the ruin!

SERAPHIS.

Still a ray
Of joy deſcends on my departing hour.
My ſon diſplays the ſpirit of his race,

Still

Still braves his adverſe fortune, and purſues
A glorious death, while we ſtand loitering here
To meet the moſt ignoble.
Otanes, let us hence, and meet the fate
That beſt becomes our dignity and fame.

OTANES.

Diſpoſe of me; and yet our poſt is ſtrong;
Thro' Memphis, thouſands will aſſert thy cauſe
And haſten to thy reſcue.

SERAPHIS.

Shall a king!
The race of heroes, honour'd as divine,
Be dragg'd in fetters, thro' a ſcoffing croud;
Caſt in ſome filthy dungeon, there to die
Of rage, or lengthen'd torture, or indulg'd
To fall by baſe aſſaſſins? Much I owe
To thee, Otanes, for thy loyalty;
Thy firm adherence to a failing cauſe;
Thy care of Menes, in his tender years;
Yet all hath prov'd in vain. My wayward fate
Involves my friends in ruin.

OTANES.

I have done
No more than duty and the ſtate requir'd,
And ſhould I fall, I fall in the ſupport
Of juſtice. 'Tis the nobleſt fate of man!

[*Noiſe without.*

SERAPHIS.

Our foes advance. Let me have done with doubt.
I muſt not be the laſt to meet my death;
As if I fear'd to quench the ling'ring flame
Of an expiring life.

OTANES.

I will explore
The cauſe of this alarm [*Exit Otanes.*

SERAPHIS. *(Noiſe continues.)*

My fame receives
A wound, at every ſtroke. The time has been,
When I could bear my armour with more eaſe.
Nor ſeem'd this ſword ſo heavy in my hand.
But tho' my body feels the froſt of age,
When danger threatens, or when glory calls,
Some youthful vigor ſtill inſpires my ſoul.
[going.

Re-enter OTANES.

OTANES.

Our efforts all are vain; the foe has ſeiz'd
The gate, and ruſhes on us! 'Tis too late!

SERAPHIS.

Otanes, no! 'Tis ne'er too late to die,
But when we live to ſhame. One laſt reſource
Remains to man, when fortune frowns the moſt,
One general refuge from the ills of life.
My remedy I graſp. This faithful friend
Shall ſet me free. *(offers to ſtab himſelf.*

OTANES.

O ſtop thy frantic hand.
What means my lord, my king?

Enter MYRTÆUS *with his party, who diſarm him.*

MYRTÆUS. *(To Seraphis.)*

So old a traitor muſt not thus eſcape.
Another death awaits.—Ha! who art thou?

SERAPHIS.

The king of Egypt! Seraphis!

MYRTÆUS.

So great,
So bold, and ſo unfortunate! My eyes

Belye

Belye my recollection, if to me
Thou art not known, by a much dearer name,
Tho' not so lofty. Pheron!

SERAPHIS.

Thou art not
Deceiv'd.

MYRTÆUS.

Thus on my knees let me embrace
Those holy feet, that led me to thy cave,
And sav'd my life, from famine and the foe,
When banish'd to the desart.

SERAPHIS.

Rise, Myrtæus!
I well remember thee in thy distress,
Thou seest me now in mine.

MYRTÆUS.

And thus my heart
Speaks gratitude.—The life thy bounty sav'd,
The light thy dictates pour'd upon my soul,
Are now at thy command. Forgive the past,
And trust my future conduct. Whilst I thought
That fate had number'd thee among the dead,
I yielded to the pressure of the times,
And bow'd to Amasis. But now thou liv'st,
I mean to serve thee, with a zealous heart,
As my protector and my lawful king.

SERAPHIS.

My noble friend! I fear thy valour now
Will nought avail. Our troops are all dispers'd,
And Memphis pours her armies round the throne
Of the usurper. All our hope is flight.

MYRTÆUS.

It must not be. Should'st thou desert our walls
Thy cause is ruin'd. Here thy name alone

Is more than armies. The command I bear
Is great. My late discovery of the plot,
Gives Amasis unbounded confidence
In my affections. Here thou may'st be safe,
Conceal'd within the cave? whilst I attempt,
By promises and arguments, to draw
The troops from their allegiance. Thou, Otanes,
Safe in my conduct may'st instruct thy friends
That range without a leader, where to meet
And wait my further orders, to renew
The daring enterprize.

SERAPHIS.

Thou counsel'st well;
The bold succeed the best. 'Tis now no time
To play a game of caution. Fortune loves
Her ravisher. We must not fear her frowns,
But bind her to our purpose.

BOTH.

We obey. [*Exeunt.*

SERAPHIS, *alone.*

My hope once more emerges from the cloud
Of my distress. The moment that appear'd
Charg'd with the execution of my fate,
Brought safety. Ha! I hear the tread of feet
This way approach. Perhaps it is the foe.
Here in the dark recesses of the cave,
I will be safe. (*Goes into the tomb.*

Enter SETHONA.

SETHONA.

Is this th' appointed place? No friends are here,
But my departed ancestors, that seem
To beckon me to their eternal rest!
O Menes, Menes! Wherefore wouldst thou rush

Amidst

Amidst the foe, nor suffer me to share
Thy danger and thy death. How dreadful seems
This moment of suspence? But hark! A groan!
I fear to listen. These dim lamps expire!
I shall be left in darkness! Something stirs,
Within the cave! Who 'ere thou art, appear——
It comes! Art thou the living or the dead?
Substantial form or mock'ry of the brain?
Why mov'st thou thus in silence?

Enter SERAPHIS,

SERAPHIS.

Let not fear——

SETHONA.

Approach me not!—Who art thou?

SERAPHIS.

I am he!
That gave thee life.

SETHONA.

My father, or my God?

SERAPHIS.

Thy father!

SETHONA.

Seraphis!

SERAPHIS.

The same, the same;
Come to my aged arms, my lovely child!

SETHONA.

My father!—O my father!

SERAPHIS.

Let not joy
O'erwhelm thy tender soul. Why dost thou weep?

SETHONA.

SETHONA.

Alas! I know not why; yet think my tears,
Are not the tears of ſorrow. Let me lean
Upon thee. Never did my head before,
Recline upon a father's breaſt.

SERAPHIS.

Perhaps,
It never may again.

SETHONA.

Short was my dream
Of joy. I wake and ſee a ſhoreleſs ſea,
Of trouble round me.

SERAPHIS.

Still we graſp a reed
Of Egypt's broken ſtrength. Does Menes live?

SETHONA.

His fate's uncertain! Striving to eſcape,
We met the foe. Conjuring me to fly,
He ſtopt and fought; though many were the ſwords,
That gleam'd around him.—If he lives ſome god
Muſt yield protection. But my fears——

SERAPHIS.

I owe
Much to his valour; though he knows me not.
Should I ſucceed, I mean to make him king.
If not, the grave will prove the whole extent
Of our dominions.

SETHONA.

Menes well deſerves
The higheſt pitch of greatneſs, bears a ſoul,
That from its native ardour, ſtill aſpires
To that perfection, which enables man
To mix with the immortals. How my heart
Exults

Exults with joy, to hear my father thus
Approve my choice and ſanctify my love.

SERAPHIS.

Thy choice! thy love! explain thy words——

SETHONA.

Alas!
Thy looks condemn me! yet, my heart declares
My innocence.

SERAPHIS.

—— I hope it does!

SETHONA.

My fears!
Again ariſe!—yet why ſhould I deny
What I eſteem my greateſt happineſs,
By love, by fate impell'd, I pledged my vows——

SERAPHIS.

To whom?——

SETHONA.

To Menes.

SERAPHIS.

Horror! fly my ſight.

SETHONA.

What have I done to merit every woe,
The wrath of heav'n can pour upon my head?
Is he not worthy?

SERAPHIS.

Moſt unfit for thee.

SETHONA.

If I have fail'd in duty take my life;
And, with my blood, blot out my crime; nor thus
With words, more ſharp than daggers, pierce my ſoul.

SERAPHIS.

SERAPHIS.

I muſt unfold——

SETHONA.

——Ha! what wouldſt thou unfold?

SERAPHIS.

A dreadful ſecret, which thou ought'ſt to know.

SETHONA.

O tell me what it is——

SERAPHIS.

That Menes——

SETHONA.

What of Menes

SERAPHIS.

Is thy brother. (*Sethona faints.*)

I've been too raſh,
The time was moſt improper. Hark! what ſound
Comes ecchoing through the tombs! Againſt the wall
I ſee the ſhadow of an armed man.
Revive, Sethona! O my child, revive!
I muſt convey her to my dark retreat.

(*leads off Sethona.*

Enter MENES.

MENES.

I ſaw ſome ruffian bear Sethona hence,
As if he were her murderer. Tenfold night,
The deepeſt grave, the manſions of the dead,
Shall not conceal—ſhall not defend—he dies!
He dies if he is mortal. (*ruſhes into the tomb.*)
Who e'er thou art, come forth——

SERAPHIS.

Raſh man, forbear!

SETHONA.

SETHONA. *(within.)*

O Menes! ſpare my father, ſpare the king——

MENES, *(re-entering.)*

Forth to the light.

SERAPHIS.

Remorſe purſues the deed.

MENES.

Who art thou?——

SERAPHIS.

Seraphis, the king, thy father.

MENES. *(throwing away his ſword.)*

The king! ye gods—thus proſtrate at thy feet,
Let me implore forgiveneſs.

SERAPHIS.

Riſe my ſon——
I do forgive thee. Come to my embrace.

Enter SETHONA. *(from the cells.)*

MENES. *(going to embrace her.)*

She lives—ſhe lives!

SETHONA.

Away! avoid my arm.

MENES.

What means Sethona? What has Menes done?
Thou deareſt to my ſoul!——

SETHONA.

Speak not of love—

MENES.

Not ſpeak of love!

SETHONA.

Thy father will explain—
Thou art——

MENES.

Thy husband. Seraphis approves;
And calls me son——

SERAPHIS. *(embracing him.)*

My son indeed! my hope!

MENES.

Thou art too kind, what merit can discharge
This gratitude I feel? what words excuse
My love, that dar'd presumptuously to rise
To thy fair daughter? I had cause to fear
Thy high displeasure, but thou giv'st me all,
Without her there is nothing.——
(Noise without.)
Ha! behold,
The tyrant comes. My sword——

AMASIS *and a party rush in.*

ATTENDANT. *(taking up the sword of Menes.)*

It now avails thee not.

AMASIS.

The gods are still
The friends of valour, none deserves to wear
A crown who can't defend it. In thy age
Attempts thou, what thy youth cou'd not perform?
We have a cell for hermits.

MENES.

Faithless man!
Dost thou exult in villainy?—'Tis not
Thy valour, but thy fortune that prevails;
And if thou dar'st to doubt it, render back

My

My ſword and try thy courage, with my youth;
Nor meanly thus, with vaunting tongue, inſult
The venerable dignity of age.

AMASIS.

Audacious traitor! Doſt thou hope to fall
By royal hands? It is the taſk of ſlaves
To puniſh ſuch as thee.

MENES.

Thy fears prevail.
Twice didſt thou ſhun me in the ranks, withdraw
Behind the ſhields of braver men, who paid
The price of life to ſave thee.

AMASIS.

Bear him hence,
And let his burning frenzy cool in chains.
His tortures ſhall be equal to his crimes.
(guards ſeize Menes.

MENES.

Yes, bear me hence!—A coward ever finds
A ſubterfuge from danger. King of Egypt,
And thou fair mourner o'er a father's woes,
Farewel for ever!

SETHONA.

Yet a moment ſtay——
Behold my death—Relentleſs tyrant, here,
Here, plunge thy ſword.—It was the lightnings flaſh,
(looks diſtractedly.)
The earth is rent, the wide abyſs unfolds;
Deep, deep and raging.—Roll me in the ſkirt
Of that deſcending cloud! I ſee thee not——
O Menes! Seraphis! ye will not leave
Your poor Sethona!

MENES.

Tyrant! ſee—behold!
The ruin thou haſt made.—The furies ſleep!
The bolt has fall'n from the right hand of Jove.—
The voice of thunder is not heard in heav'n.
Farewel for ever!—Oh my king!—my love!
Bear me to death. The rack itſelf appears
A place of ſlumber. In the laſt extreme,
One object of ambition ſtill remains
With the exalted mind—it is to die
With fortitude. *(Menes is carried off.*

AMASIS.

Be Seraphis ſecured;
And bear Sethona to our royal halls.

SETHONA.

Fear not the tyrant. Thou art Egypt's king.
They come! they come! Thy grey hairs will defend—
Thou ſeeſt them not—thy eyes are dim with age.
Raiſe not your bloody hands. Away, away!
Pity my father. He is weak and old——
They ſhall not kill thee, whilſt I claſp thee thus—
(embracing Seraphis.

AMASIS.

Tear them aſunder——

SERAPHIS.

——Tyrant! though I meant
With juſt contempt, without a word or groan,
To bear thy utmoſt tortures, and ſupport
With dignity, the rigour of my fate.
Yet thou haſt found a way to make my heart
Pour forth its anguiſh. Haſt thou no remorſe,
Thus to oppreſs me with a father's grief?
Give me thy tortures, yet if juſtice dwells
Among the gods, the vengeance due to guilt,
Shall fall on thee.

AMASIS

AMASIS. *(to his Guards.)*
Haſte, force them from this place.

SERAPHIS,
Tyrant! the power is thine. But ſtill I ſcorn
Thy utmoſt efforts. Come to my embrace,
My poor unhappy daughter——Now, farewell!

SETHONA.
Hold, cruel men! ye ſhall not tear me hence.
Leave me! they pull too hard. He is my father!
Alas, we part for ever!

SERAPHIS.
Child belov'd!
We part to meet again. Thy tender ſoul,
Already on the wing, prepares for flight.
Soon ſhalt thou join my ſpirit as it flies,
And leave behind thy anguiſh and thy woes.
[*They are both carried off.*]

AMASIS.
Theſe rigours dire neceſſity demands.
But ſtill, though wild ambition ſteels my heart,
I feel ſome pangs of nature at their grief.
Fool that I am!—Compaſſion to my foes
Is cruelty, perdition to myſelf!
This feeble fit is vaniſh'd with the ſcene,
And all the vigour of my ſoul returns. [*Exit.*

END *of the* FOURTH ACT.

ACT V.

SCENE, *the court before a* PRISON.

AMASIS.

O Royalty! What joys haſt thou to boaſt,
To recompence thy cares? Ambition ſeems
The paſſion of a god. Yet, from my throne
Have I with envy ſeen the naked ſlave
Rejoicing in the muſic of his chains,
And ſinging toil away; and then, at eve,
Returning peaceful to his couch of reſt.
Whilſt I ſat anxious and perplex'd with cares;
Projecting, plotting, fearful of events:
Or like a wounded ſnake, lay down to writhe,
The ſleepleſs night, upon a bed of ſtate.
But I am plung'd too far into the ſtream,
To gain the ſhore I left.—They both ſhall die.

Enter ORUS *guarded.*

GUARD.

O king, we found this prieſt amidſt the foe,
Bearing aloft the image of his god;
Invoking heav'n, with prayers, to aid the cauſe
Of Seraphis. Encouraging his friends,
With prophecies and lying oracles,
And divinations fatal to his lord.

AMASIS.

AMASIS.

His prophecies and vain portents we ſcorn;
Falſe are his arts. Say, do the gods approve
Of treaſon?

ORUS.

Never; and for that the gods
Have diſapprov'd of thee. A ſubject born,
A miniſter in truſt; didſt thou not ſeize
Thy maſter's throne by perfidy? Purſue
His life with rancour? Trample on thy foes,
And ſcourge the world as with the wrath of heav'n.
Rous'd by a nation's woes, this great revolt
I meditated long. My duty done,
I leave the reſt to heav'n.

AMASIS.

Doſt thou confeſs
Thy crime?

ORUS.

My virtue. When the aged king,
On thy revolt, amidſt his flying hoſt,
Was headlong borne into the Nile, and, there,
Suppos'd to periſh. Of the ancient race,
Two infant princes were by me conceal'd;
In hopes, one day, I might reſtore the line.
The heir of empire, and the only ſon
Of Sethos, younger brother to the king.
One died in youth. The other ſtill remains.

AMASIS.

Thou hoary traitor tell me where? Or death——

ORUS.

My lips are ſeal'd. Not prompted by my fears,
I ſpoke, but from the fulneſs of a heart,
Exulting in its enmity to thee.

AMASIS.

AMASIS.

Prepare to feel the torture.

ORUS.

That I ſcorn.
The more I ſuffer in a virtuous cauſe
The more my glory. When we vanquiſh fear,
Tyrants may rage in vain! To me thy frowns
And menaces are triumphs.

AMASIS. *(to his guards.)*

Bear him hence,
And prove his fortitude.

ORUS.

When death awaits,
I wou'd not ſeem to linger. [*Exit Orus guarded.*

AMASIS.

Well he bears
The weight of his misfortune. Seraphis
And Menes too muſt die. He ſtill appear'd
Of doubtful origin. Perhaps the ſon
Of Sethos. Doubts are vain. 'Tis folly now
To truſt to fortune. In theſe cells they lie.
(To his guards, two of whom enters the cells.

[*A Storm. Thunder.*]

Enter SETHONA, *diſtractedly.*

SETHONA.

Oſiris thunders! yet the tyrant lives,
Whilſt Seraphis and Menes are no more!
O that my ſpirit, like that tranſient beam,
Would take its courſe upon the veering winds.

AMASIS.

Why com'ſt thou thus, Sethona? Hence, retire!

SETHONA.

SETHONA. *(not observing him.)*

It is the melancholy bird of night,
Perch'd on that mould'ring battlement, that screams
Her boding notes of woe. Ye hideous forms,
That dimly rise upon the night, and float
In the wild tempest of the troubled air!
Roll not your mournful voices on the storm.
Away! Your awful gestures are in vain,
All—all my fears are vanquish'd by my woes.

AMASIS.

She must not tarry here!

SETHONA.

What groan was that?
In that dark cell I heard the sound of chains.
This is my way! that taper shall direct
My steps. Ye awful spirits of my race,
I come to join you in your dark repose! *(going.)*

AMASIS.

Sethona, stop. Let me convey thee hence.
Why dost thou gaze upon the vaulted roof,
As if some god descended; or the heav'ns
Were open'd to thy view?

SETHONA.

The cloud is broke!
Behold him mounted on the cherub's wing!
His white beard streams in air! The red drops fall
Upon me! He was old! Hard was the heart,
And ruthless was the hand!

AMASIS.

She heeds me not!
Excess of grief has almost quench'd the light
Of reason in her mind.

SETHONA.

Was ever love

Like mine? Pale as the watry cloud his face!
Cold, cold his breaſt, and ſilent is his tongue!
His ruby lips! Sethona, like the bee,
Suck'd honey from the roſe! I knew not then
He was my brother!

AMASIS.

How her frenzy burns!
It runs on Menes.

SETHONA.

When his bright eyes roll'd,
I look'd not at the ſun; and when he ſpoke
My fingers dropt the lyre. This wound was death.
It bleeds! it bleeds! This breaſt was void of guilt.
Why do I weep? To-night I am the bride,
The bride of Amaſis. Theſe wedding robes
Will prove my winding ſheet.

AMASIS.

Remorſe begins
To faſten on my heart. I feel, I feel,
That guilt, like the envenom'd ſcorpion, bears
Its own death's ſting. Her frenzy ſeems to add
New luſtre to her beauty; and thoſe eyes
Were not ſo piercing, when the milder beams
Of wiſdom temper'd their reſiſtleſs pow'r:
And yet the form alone remains. The light
Is gone, and, like the dim orb of the moon,
She labours in eclipſe.

SETHONA.

Hark? Who art thou?
Give me thy hand.

AMASIS.

What would'ſt thou with my hand?

SETHONA.

Away, away! waſh out theſe purple ſtains!

AMASIS.

It is too late.

SETHONA.

Too late! who murder'd them?

AMASIS.

Ha! how ſhe probes my heart, where moſt inflam'd?

SETHONA.

Why do I tarry here? Let me behold
Their bleeding wounds! [*going.*

AMASIS. (*ſtopping her.*)

It muſt not, ſhall not be!

SETHONA.

Tyrant away! My ſorrows cure themſelves,
And vanquiſh'd nature finds repoſe in death.
The fountain of my tears is dry, my eyes
Burn with the raging fever of my brain.
'Tis he! 'tis Menes! Oh, I follow thee!
Roll'd in that ſhadowy mantle, thou ſhalt bear
Sethona from her woes. (*ruſhes out.*

Enter OFFICER *haſtily.*

OFFICER.

O king, prepare!

AMASIS.

Speak, coward, ſpeak! for we have ears to hear
The worſt, and courage to defy it. Speak
The danger boldly!

OFFICER.

Treaſon is abroad.
Myrtæus has betray'd thee.

AMASIS.

What of him?

OFFICER.

His ſquadron's ruſhing onward, loudly call
For Seraphis and Menes.

AMASIS.

Thus I graſp
A ſword that never fail'd of victory. [*Exeunt.*

Enter SERAPHIS, *and Guard from the priſon.*

GUARD.

No further order comes. I wait in vain——
The hour is paſt. The king muſt be obey'd!

SERAPHIS.

The king! behold thy king!—thy ancient lord,
Whom thou wouldſt murder, ſoldier, well thou know'ſt!
The tyrant, Amiſis, uſurp'd my throne.
And yet thou ſerv'ſt him in a deed that draws
The dreadful vengeance of the gods upon thee.

GUARD.

The gods have plac'd me in the rank of ſlaves,
And 'tis my duty to obey that lord
Whom fate has ſet above me. (*noiſe without.*

SERAPHIS.

Yet delay
A moment. Stop the hand of death. My hopes
Are not extinguiſh'd—Many are my friends
In Memphis.—Fortune ſuddenly may change
And thou ſhalt be rewarded.—— (*noiſe continues.*)

GUARD.

Certain death
Attends my diſobedience. Haſte, prepare
To die!——

SERAPHIS.

SERAPHIS.

I have a meſſage to convey
To poor Sethona.

GUARD.

'Tis too late——

SERAPHIS.

Ye gods receive my ſpirit!

MENES, *ruſhing in between, in his chains, from another cell.*

MENES.

Slay me firſt——

MYRTÆUS *and his party ruſh in and interpoſe.*

MYRTÆUS.

Forbear, aſſaſſin!

SERAPHIS.

Ha! my gallant friend!

MYRTÆUS.

My royal maſter! my beloved prince!——
Strike off their chains.

MENES.

Is Amaſis alive?

MYRTÆUS.

I ſaw him not in battle.

MENES.

Still there's room
For me to ſhare the glory——

Enter an OFFICER.

OFFICER.

Amaſis
Puts all to flight.

MENES.

We ſoon ſhall ſtop his courſe.
Give me thy ſword. The force of Memphis now
Shall

Shall not avail him. Whether does he turn
The tide of battle?

OFFICER.

From the brazen gate
He burſts upon us.

MENES.

We ſhall meet him there. [*Exit.*

SERAPHIS.

Let us ſupport the prince. Tho' Amaſis
Is great in arms, our fortune may prevail.
The worſt event will change a ſhameful death,
To one of glory in the front of war. [*Exeunt.*

Enter SETHONA, *from the other ſide of the ſtage.*

SETHONA.

Theſe are the cells of my departed race.
I find them not. In vain I ſearch around,
What tomb conceals them? Whither are they borne?
O Menes! Menes! hear'ſt thou not my voice?
Sethona's voice, who comes, in her deſpair,
To mix the blood, that warms her heart, with thine.
Stretch forth thy pale hand, from that airy ſhroud,
And roll that cloud of ſorrow from thy brow.
The blaſt of night is in my ears. The voice
Of dying winter does not thus complain.
Is there no reſt for mortals in the tomb?
Think not I mean to tarry. He is gone——
He turns with horror from a ſiſter's love!
A load of guilt lies heavy on my ſoul!

Enter AMASIS. *ſuddenly.*

AMASIS.

The gods deſcend in arms!—
Hurlir

Hurling their terrors, midſt my flying hoſt,
Blaſting my glory!—Ha! behold the cauſe
Of ſhame, of ruin!—Wherefore ſhould ſhe live,
The joy, the triumph of my mortal foe?——
Prepare for death——

SETHONA.

Art thou ſo much my friend?

AMASIS.

Thy friend!—thy murderer—Ye gods! ſhe ſmiles
Secure in her enchantments. What is man
When thus oppos'd? Diſaſtrous ſtar, that ſhed'ſt
Thy fatal influence o'er my life, thou fall'ſt!——
Thou fall'ſt! and darkneſs ſhall involve my ſoul.

SETHONA, *kneeling.*

Look down, Oſiris, let my ſpirit find
Repoſe in death: O Menes, to thy reſt
Receive Sethona, with a brother's love.
Strike here! Thou murderer of my race—behold.

AMASIS.

A boſom arm'd with more than temper'd ſteel.
Invulnerable beauty!——

SETHONA.

Ha, thy wrath
Thy bloody purpoſe I embrac'd with joy.
But now I fear thy pity. Grant me death,
Nor look upon me, but with deadly rage.

AMASIS.

Thy ſcorn demands it.—Fury ſteels my heart,
And vengeance points the dagger;—now thou dy'ſt,
A ſacrifice to love,—revenge—deſpair!——

Enter

Enter MENES.

MENES.

Stop, murderer, ſtop——

AMASIS, *quitting Sethona.*

Advance, thou trembling ſlave!

MENES.

Perfidious man! In me behold a foe
That never turn'd from danger.—Were the ſtrength
Of thouſands on thy ſword, my joy wou'd riſe
To meet thee thus in arms.

SETHONA, *retiring behind.*

Thou pow'r ſupreme!
Protect our cauſe and thine.

AMASIS.

Vain boy, approach!
Words will no more avail.——

(*they fight, Amaſis falls.*

MENES.

Thus periſh traitors!

AMASIS.

Thou haſt prevail'd. Receive thy valour's prize.
The man that conquers Amaſis, deſerves
His throne, nay more, Sethona's love.—My guilt—
My guilt o'erwhelms me. By no vulgar hand,
I die.—The gods by thee avenge my crimes——[*dies.*

MENES.

The gods are juſt! Thou ſource of all my joys!
(*advancing to Sethona.*

SETHONA,

SETHONA.

Hence, ſhun me, fly me, tear me from thy heart.
Revoke thy vows, leſt the offended gods
Shou'd pour their fury on our guilty heads.
The bar of nature, and the wrath of heav'n,
Are plac'd between us.

MENES.

Ha! thy frenzy ſtill!

SETHONA.

Yes, Menes, yes; my frenzy well may burn.
Yet now, by reaſon, I'm too well inform'd
Thou art too near allied to me in blood!
Did not thy father tell thee? Seraphis!

MENES.

Ha! what of Seraphis! My doubts ariſe.
Burſt not my anxious heart. Reveal! reveal!

SETHONA.

Thou art—alas! how can I ſpeak the name?
Thou art—my brother!

MENES.

Brother! All ye gods
Look down! What heavier curſe remains in heav'n
To cruſh my wretched head? What powerful charm
Works on theſe new creations of the night,
And ſets our jarring ſenſes every hour
At variance? I am loſt!

Enter SERAPHIS, MYRTÆUS, OTANES, *and* ORUS.

SERAPHIS.

This way the prince
Preſs'd forward on the foe. Advance with ſpeed.
He leads to victory!

MENES. (*ſhewing his breaſt.*)

Here ſheath your ſwords.

SERAPHIS.

The tyrant! ſtretch'd beneath the hand of death.
Now all is ſafe. Thy fortune has prevail'd.

MENES.

Yes, to my ruin!

SERAPHIS.

Ha! no wound appears!

MENES.

Within this boſom is a mortal wound.
I am thy ſon. Sethona is my ſiſter.

ORUS.

Baniſh thy grief. No ſiſter e'er was thine.
Thy birth, tho' long conceal'd, at length is known.
Thou art the ſon of Sethos.

MENES.

Sethos' ſon?

SERAPHIS.

I know it all. My brother's only child!
Sethona now is thine.

MENES.

Receive, ye gods!
The praiſe your goodneſs claims. Now joy returns,
And gladdens all my ſoul. Again, my love,
I may infold thee in theſe longing arms.

SETHONA.

O, Menes! heav'n, in this alone, repays
All, all our ſorrows.

SERAPHIS.

Join your hands. The gods
Their choiceſt bleſſings ſhow'r upon you both,

As

As the ſun cheriſhes the ſubject world;
Or as the devious Nile diſpenſes joy
And plenty where it flows; ſo may your virtues
Diffuſe bright happineſs, o'er all the land.

MENES.

My king! my father! ſuch I call thee now.
My lov'd Sethona!

SETHONA.

Now no tyrant lives
To bar our love. Oſiris now aſſents.

SERAPHIS.

Ariſe, my children. Still I have a ſon!
Sethona too is ſafe. My joy is full,
Since, now, my day of life declines apace,
My daughter and my ſceptre ſhall be thine.
Thy care, Otanes, ſhall direct his ſteps,
And make his kingdom flouriſh. Thou, Myrtæus,
Vers'd in the buſineſs of the field, ſhall guide
His youthful valour. None of all our friends
Shall be ungratified. Nor ſhalt our foes
Repine at our ſucceſs. To conquer ſeems
Leſs worthy of our glory, than to ſpare.

[*Exeunt omnes.*

FINIS.

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